

Gretchen Whitmer

Gretchen Esther Whitmer (born August 23, 1971) is an American politician serving as the 49th governor of Michigan since 2019. A member of the Democratic Party, she served in the Michigan House of Representatives from 2001 to 2006 and in the Michigan Senate from 2006 to 2015.

Whitmer was born and raised in Michigan. She is a graduate of Forest Hills Central High School near Grand Rapids, Michigan State University, and the Michigan State University College of Law. She ran unsuccessfully for the state house in the 1990s before being elected in 2000. In 2006, she became a state senator, a position she kept until term limits forced her to step down in 2015. She was the Senate's first female Democratic leader from 2011 to 2015. In 2013, Whitmer gained national attention for a floor speech during a debate on abortion in which she shared her experience of being sexually assaulted. For six months in 2016, she was the county prosecutor for Ingham County.

Whitmer was elected governor in the 2018 gubernatorial election, defeating Republican Attorney General Bill Schuette. As governor, Whitmer has focused on healthcare and infrastructure. In February 2020, she was selected to give the Democratic response to President Donald Trump's 2020 State of the Union Address.

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Her Excellency^{[1][2]}

Gretchen Whitmer



49th Governor of Michigan

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 1, 2019

Lieutenant Garlin Gilchrist

Preceded by Rick Snyder

Ingham County Prosecutor

In office

July 21, 2016 – December 31, 2016

Preceded by Stuart Dunning III

Succeeded by Carol Siemon

Minority Leader of the Michigan Senate

In office

January 1, 2011 – January 1, 2015

Deputy Steve Bieda

Preceded by Mike Prusi

Succeeded by Jim Ananich

**Member of the Michigan Senate
from the 23rd district**

In office

March 21, 2006 – January 1, 2015

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Early life and education

Gretchen Whitmer was born in 1971 in Lansing, Michigan and is the eldest of three children of Sharon H. "Sherry" Reisig and Richard Whitmer, who were both attorneys.^{[3][4]} Her father was head of the state department of commerce under Governor William Milliken and was the president and CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan between 1988 and 2006.^[5] Whitmer's mother worked as an assistant attorney general under Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley.^[6] Her parents divorced when she was ten years old; she and her siblings moved with their mother to Grand Rapids. Her father traveled from his home in Detroit to visit the family at least once a week.^[7]

After graduation from Forest Hills Central High School, just outside Grand Rapids,^[8] Whitmer earned a BA degree in communications from Michigan State University in 1993 and a Juris Doctor from Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University in 1998.^[9]

State legislature

House of Representatives

Whitmer originally ran for the Michigan House of Representatives in the 1990s but was unsuccessful.^[10] In 2000, she tried again and was elected to represent the 23rd legislative district. She was reelected in 2002 and 2004.^[11]

State Senate

In March 2006, Whitmer won a special election to the Michigan State Senate, replacing Virg Bernero, who had been elected mayor of Lansing in November 2005.^[12] She was elected to a full term in November, and reelected in 2010. In 2011, Whitmer's Democratic colleagues unanimously chose her to be the Senate Democratic Leader, making her the first woman to lead a party caucus in the Senate.^[6] Due to term limits, Whitmer was unable to run for reelection in 2014 and left office in 2015.^[13] In 2013, she received national recognition when she discussed her experience of being sexually assaulted.^[14] She told the story during a debate about abortion rights, particularly for victims of rape, arguing victims should be allowed to terminate pregnancies that result from rape.^[15]

Preceded by	<u>Virgil Bernero</u>
Succeeded by	<u>Curtis Hertel Jr.</u>
Member of the Michigan House of Representatives	
In office	
	January 1, 2001 – March 21, 2006
Preceded by	<u>Laura Baird</u>
Succeeded by	<u>Mark Meadows</u>
Constituency	70th district (2001–2003) 69th district (2003–2006)
Personal details	
Born	Gretchen Esther Whitmer August 23, 1971 <u>Lansing, Michigan, U.S.</u>
Political party	<u>Democratic</u>
Spouse(s)	Gary Shrewsbury (divorced) Marc P. Mallory (<u>m.</u> 2011)
Children	2
Residence	<u>Governor's Mansion</u>
Education	<u>Michigan State University</u> (BA, JD)
Signature	
Website	Government website (http://michigan.gov/gov)

Ingham County prosecutor

On May 11, 2016, it was announced that the judges of Michigan's 30th Judicial Circuit Court had unanimously selected Whitmer to serve the remaining six months of outgoing Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III's term^[16] after he was arrested on March 14, 2016, and charged with 11 counts of involvement with a prostitute and four counts of willful neglect of duty.^[17] In a letter dated March 29, 2016, Dunnings announced he would resign effective July 2.^[18]

On June 21, 2016, Whitmer was administered the oath of office as prosecutor by Ingham County Circuit Court Chief Judge Janelle Lawless. She said her top priorities during her six months of service would be to determine if any other officials in the prosecutor's office knew about Dunnings's alleged crimes and to change how the office handled domestic violence and sexual assault cases.^[19]

On July 22, 2016, Whitmer issued an 11-page report on whether Dunnings's alleged criminal activity had affected cases handled by the office. The report concluded that employees "were never asked to compromise a case or look the other way" and that she had "full confidence that any problem that had existed in this office left with Mr. Dunnings."^[20]^[21] Whitmer's term expired on December 31, 2016.

Governorship

2018 election

On January 3, 2017, Whitmer announced she would run in the 2018 Michigan gubernatorial race.^[22]

On August 7, 2018, Whitmer became the Democratic nominee for governor of Michigan.^[23] She won all 83 counties in the state in the Democratic primary.^[24]

In July 2018, Republican officials accused Whitmer of supporting the movement to abolish ICE, a claim Whitmer disputed. She said that if elected she would focus on improving Michigan's "fundamentals", such as schools, roads, and water systems.^[25]

Whitmer's main opponent was Republican Bill Schuette, the term-limited Attorney General of Michigan. The two candidates met for a debate on October 12, 2018, in Grand Rapids at WOOD-TV. A second debate was held at WDIV studios in Detroit on October 24.^[26]

Whitmer defeated Schuette in the November 6 election by nearly a 10-point margin.^[27]

Tenure

Whitmer describes herself as a progressive Democrat^[28] who can work with state legislators from different political perspectives.^[28]

As both a gubernatorial candidate and as governor, one of Whitmer's key pledges was to "fix the damn roads", a reference to Michigan's struggling infrastructure. Her initial post-election plan to fund road repairs with a 45-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase was, however, deeply unpopular, with one poll finding



Whitmer speaking at a National Guard ceremony in January 2019

it opposed by 75% of Michigan voters, including majorities of both Democrats and independents.^[29] Democratic legislators in Michigan's Republican-controlled legislature largely declined to support the plan, which would have nearly tripled Michigan's gas tax and potentially made it the highest in the nation.^{[30][31]}

Whitmer's first budget earmarked several billions of dollars for investment in infrastructure.^{[32][33][34]} In 2019, she struggled with the Republican-controlled legislature to pass a budget and made several concessions.^[32]

The gubernatorial election and national conversation during Whitmer's time in office focused largely on healthcare. During the election, she was the only Democratic candidate not to support a single-payer healthcare system.^[35] As governor, she has focused on women's healthcare and Medicaid expansion.^[32]

In February 2020, Whitmer was selected to deliver the Democratic response to Donald Trump's 2020 State of the Union Address. Michigan is considered a swing state in the 2020 presidential election, and it was speculated that Democrats hoped selecting Whitmer would bolster their chance of winning the state.^{[32][36][37]}

In May 2020, the Edenville Dam gave way after awaiting an overdue report on its safety standards. Whitmer directed the EGLE to form an investigation that "state Republicans, flooding victim advocates and dam safety experts" criticized, concerned that the state's environmental agency would essentially be investigating itself.^[38] Guidelines from the Association of State Dam Safety Officials advocate independent investigators. An inquiry launched by the U.S. House of Representatives later gave the EGLE and FERC a two-week deadline for answers.^[39]

COVID-19 pandemic

Whitmer issued a stay-at-home order in response to the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020.^[40] This order was met with broad public approval; a March poll found that 69% of Michigan residents supported Whitmer's actions, including 61% of self-identified Republicans.^[41]

After Whitmer extended the order and tightened restrictions in April,^{[42][43]} an eight-hour protest against the restrictions organized by the Michigan Conservative Coalition and co-hosted by the Michigan Freedom Fund^{[44][45]} attracted between 3,000 and 4,000 protesters to the Michigan State Capitol.^{[46][47][48]} *New York Times* columnist Charlie Warzel described the demonstration as "twisted, paranoid and racialized", pushed by conspiracy theorists such as Alex Jones.^[49] Jeanine Pirro of Fox News praised the protesters, saying, "God bless them, it's going to happen all over the country".^[50] At the time of the protest, more than 1,900 people in Michigan had died after contracting the virus.^[42] On April 29 a Michigan judge upheld the order against legal challenge, ruling that "Our fellow residents have an interest to remain unharmed by a highly communicable and deadly virus. And since the state entered the Union in 1837, it has had the broad power to act for the public health of the entire state when faced with a public crisis."^[51]

Polling by the Detroit Regional Chamber in mid-April found that 57% of Michigan residents approved of Whitmer's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, including the extension.^{[52][53][54][55]} The family of the first child to die of coronavirus in Michigan expressed support for Whitmer's decision to extend the stay-at-home order on the grounds that social distancing would save lives. LaVondria Herbert, the child's mother, said, "I want to say thank you to the governor for making people go home."^[56]

Electoral history

2000 State House

Michigan House of Representatives District 70 Democratic primary, 2000 ^[57]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer	2,434	47.4	N/A
<u>Democratic</u>	Mary Lindemann	2,152	41.9	N/A
<u>Democratic</u>	John Schlinker	284	5.5	N/A
<u>Democratic</u>	Robert McCann	263	5.1	N/A
Majority		281	5.5	N/A
Turnout		5,133		

Michigan House of Representatives District 70 Election, 2000 ^[58]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer	17,409	56.6	-0.1
<u>Republican</u>	Bill Hollister	13,355	43.4	+3.6
Majority		4,054	13.2	-3.7
Turnout		30,764		+21.5
<u>Democratic hold</u>		Swing		

2002 State House

Michigan House of Representatives District 69 Democratic primary, 2002 ^[59]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (redistricted incumbent)	8,821	100	
Turnout		8,821		

Michigan House of Representatives District 69 Election, 2002 ^[60]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (redistricted incumbent)	18,002	62.5	+5.9
<u>Republican</u>	Larry Ward	10,783	37.5	-5.9
Majority		7,219	25.0	-10.8
Turnout		28,785		+12.9
<u>Democratic hold</u>		Swing		

2004 State House

Michigan House of Representatives District 69 Democratic primary, 2004 ^[61]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (incumbent)	5,418	100	
		Turnout	5,418	

Michigan House of Representatives District 69 Election, 2004 ^[62]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (incumbent)	26,828	65.7	+3.2
<u>Republican</u>	Angela Lindsay	14,307	34.3	-3.2
		Majority	12,521	31.4
		Turnout	40,865	+42.0
<u>Democratic hold</u>		Swing		

2006 State Senate special election

Michigan Senate District 23 special election, 2006				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer	64,393	100	
<u>Republican</u>	Vincent Green			
		Majority		
		Turnout	64,393	100
<u>Democratic hold</u>		Swing		

2006 State Senate

Michigan Senate District 23 Democratic primary, 2006 ^[63]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (incumbent)	18,092	100	
		Turnout	18,092	

Michigan Senate District 23 election, 2006				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (incumbent)	64,404	69.8	
<u>Republican</u>	Vincent Green	27,931	30.2	
		Majority	36,473	39.5
		Turnout	92,335	100
<u>Democratic hold</u>		Swing		

2010 State Senate

Michigan Senate District 23 Democratic primary, 2010 ^[64]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (incumbent)	18,040	100	
Turnout		18,040		

Michigan Senate District 23 election, 2010				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer (incumbent)	49,974	64.0	-5.8
<u>Republican</u>	Kyle Haubrich	28,127	36.0	+5.8
Majority		21,847	28.0	-11.6
Turnout		78,101	100	-15.4
<u>Democratic hold</u>		<u>Swing</u>	-5.8	

2018 gubernatorial

Michigan gubernatorial Democratic primary, 2018 ^[65]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer	588,436	52.0	
<u>Democratic</u>	Abdul El-Sayed	342,179	30.2	
<u>Democratic</u>	Shri Thanedar	200,645	17.7	
Total votes		1,131,447	100.0	

Michigan gubernatorial election, 2018 ^[66] ^[67]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
<u>Democratic</u>	Gretchen Whitmer Garlin Gilchrist	2,256,791	53.34%	+6.48%
<u>Republican</u>	Bill Schuette Lisa Posthumus Lyons	1,853,650	43.81%	-7.11%
<u>Libertarian</u>	Bill Gelineau Angelique Chaiser Thomas	56,752	1.34%	+0.21%
<u>Green</u>	Jennifer V. Kurland Charin H. Davenport	28,857	0.68%	+0.21%
<u>Constitution</u>	Todd Schleiger Earl P. Lackie	24,701	0.58%	-0.03%
<u>Natural Law</u>	Keith Butkovitch Raymond Warner	10,258	0.24%	-
Majority		403,141	9.53%	+5.47%
Turnout		4,231,009		34.04%
<u>Democratic gain from Republican</u>		<u>Swing</u>		

Political positions

Education

Whitmer would like to phase in full-day Universal Pre-K for 4-year-olds in Michigan. She would eliminate Michigan's current 3rd grade "read-or-flunk" policy, which she has said penalizes students who have been failed by the education system, and would instead work to improve their reading skills. She proposes that all high school students be offered two years of debt-free higher education, either college or post-secondary training for skilled trades.^[68]

Health care

Whitmer has said she would fight Republican efforts to take away protections for patients with preexisting conditions. In the State Senate, Whitmer successfully worked to expand Medicaid coverage in the state. She has spoken against single-payer healthcare as unrealistic. She has stated she would work to lower the cost of prescription drugs and would get rid of Shuette's drug immunity law, which she believes protects drug companies from legal trouble if their drugs harm or kill people.^[69]

Taxation

In March 2019 Whitmer proposed increasing the gasoline tax 45 cents per gallon to fund road repairs. If it is enacted Michigan will have the highest fuel tax in the United States.^[70]

Personal life

Whitmer has two children with her first husband, Gary Shrewsbury. The couple divorced, and in 2011 she married dentist Marc P. Mallory, who has three children from his previous marriage.^{[71][72]} Whitmer and Mallory live in East Lansing, Michigan, with her two daughters and his three sons.^{[73][74]}

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External links

- Government website** (<https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer>)
- Campaign website** (<https://gretchenwhitmer.com/>)
- Profile** (<https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/37868>) at **Vote Smart**
- Appearances** (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?gretchenwhitmer>) on **C-SPAN**

Michigan House of Representatives

Preceded by Laura Baird	Member of the Michigan House of Representatives from the 70th district 2001–2003	Succeeded by Judy Emmons
Preceded by Michael C. Murphy	Member of the Michigan House of Representatives from the 69th district 2003–2006	Succeeded by Mark Meadows

Michigan Senate

Preceded by Virgil Bernero	Member of the Michigan Senate from the 23rd district 2006–2015	Succeeded by Curtis Hertel Jr.
Preceded by Mike Prusi	Minority Leader of the Michigan Senate 2011–2015	Succeeded by Jim Ananich

Party political offices

Preceded by Mark Schauer	Democratic nominee for Governor of Michigan 2018	Most recent
Preceded by Stacey Abrams	Response to the State of the Union address 2020	

Political offices

Preceded by Rick Snyder	Governor of Michigan 2019–present	Incumbent
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U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)

Preceded by Mike Pence <i>as Vice President</i>	Order of Precedence of the United States Within Michigan	Succeeded by Mayor of city in which event is held
		Succeeded by Otherwise Nancy Pelosi <i>as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives</i>
Preceded by Asa Hutchinson <i>as Governor of Arkansas</i>	Order of Precedence of the United States Outside Michigan	Succeeded by Ron DeSantis <i>as Governor of Florida</i>

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